

## Chapter 9

### Round 2: Bradley Versus Yorty

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Daniel J.B. Mitchell

Professor-Emeritus, UCLA Anderson School of Management  
and UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

*"I am entering this race to win."*

Tom Bradley announcing his candidacy  
in the 1973 mayoral election<sup>1</sup>

In past editions of *California Policy Options*, we have followed the electoral career of former Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty, the candidate who wasn't supposed to win in 1961 – but did, and who was supposed to win in 1965 – and did.<sup>2</sup> While his electoral style in 1961 was what today would be termed "populist," it lacked the element of racism that has gone with modern-day populism until Yorty's third campaign in 1969 against African American Tom Bradley. In that campaign, Bradley – who appeared likely to win – was defeated with charges by Yorty that he was a front for Black militants seeking to take over the city.

In this chapter, we look at what became a rematch between Yorty and Bradley in 1973. Of course, there is no suspense in this story; it is well known that Bradley won in Round 2. But going into that election, it was not even clear that the ultimate contest would be Yorty vs. Bradley. For the earlier contest to repeat, both men would have to come in as the top two candidates in the primary on April 3, 1973, and then face each other in the runoff on May 29th. However, there were other possible candidates that might have turned the 1973 race into Yorty versus someone else.

Again, there is no suspense with hindsight. But back in late 1972 when the race was just getting started, what would happen was not known or clear. In this chapter, we will look at what happened in that contest of a half century ago and see what lessons can be learned for contemporary politics.

### **Background Factors of 1973**

*"At 12:30 Paris time today, January 23, 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was initialed by Dr. Henry Kissinger on behalf of the United States, and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam."*

President Nixon announcing the "ending" of the Vietnam War<sup>3</sup>

One of the forces that drives populism is a sense that the old (and better) order is failing or is being assaulted. In the 1969 campaign, LA was just four years from the 1965 Watts Riot, which occurred not long after the municipal election that year. In addition, there were the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and of Robert Kennedy in 1968, college student disturbances related to the Vietnam War and

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in "Unruh Ready to Enter L.A. Mayoral Race," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1972. In what follows in this chapter, we rely heavily on the *LA Times* and other newspapers of the period. Direct citations will be used mainly for direct quotes.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "The Trash-Talking Candidate Who Wasn't Supposed to Win" *California Policy Options* 2018 (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2018); "Before the Storm: Sam Yorty's Second Election as Mayor of Los Angeles," *California Policy Options* 2021 (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2021); "Round 1: Yorty Versus Bradley," *California Policy Options* 2022 (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2022). Available (respectively) at: <https://archive.org/details/YortyCPO2018>; <https://archive.org/details/before-the-storm>; <https://archive.org/details/round-1>.

<sup>3</sup>"Address to the Nation Announcing Conclusion of an Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam." Available at <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2017/08/address-nation-announcing-conclusion-agreement-ending-war-restoring-peace-vietnam-january-23-1973/>.

the draft, and cultural challenges such as hippies, drug use, feminism, etc., that accompanied the post-World War II baby boom into adulthood.

At the state level, voters had already responded to such developments by a move to the political right in 1966 with the election of Ronald Reagan as governor. At the national level, voters responded with a move to the right with the election of Richard Nixon as president in 1968. Viewed in that larger political ecosystem, perhaps the Bradley loss of 1969 can be seen as a byproduct of these broader trends.

Four years later, however, there was a somewhat different mood. There were no recent assassinations, and the Watts Riot was now eight years in the rear view mirror. With regard to the Vietnam War, after a U.S. bombing campaign, the Paris peace talks were underway. In January 1973, a deal at those talks was reached whereby American troops would withdraw over time. An end to the draft was announced. So, there was a lull in the Vietnam War, and reduced student agitation. That these developments would lead to the fall of Saigon in 1975 was not foreseen.

In addition, in 1973, the left-right political pendulum was beginning to swing back toward the left. The Nixon administration's Watergate scandal was beginning to be revealed in televised, and increasingly widely watched, congressional hearings as LA's municipal election season heated up. The trial of Daniel Ellsberg for turning over the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* in 1971 aborted when it was revealed that some of the Watergate defendants had burgled Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office. The year 1973 also saw California Governor Ronald Reagan's attempt to impose a spending cap on state government via a ballot proposition fail to be endorsed by voters.<sup>4</sup> A year later, Republican Reagan was replaced by Democrat Jerry Brown as governor.

While the decade of the 1970s was stormy by many measures, the first half of 1973 was something of a lull in the storm. In short, the law-and-order issue that worked for Yorty in 1969, when everything seemed to be going wrong, might not be the key concern in LA for the 1973 mayoral campaign. As we will see below, major candidates for mayor certainly perceived law and order to be critical. But like the old adage about generals fighting the last war, it turned out to be less of a decisive issue than campaign strategists predicted.

### **The Beginning of Election Season**

Although 1973 saw the California political pendulum swinging to the left, 1972 was a very different year. President Nixon was re-elected in a landslide, including within the state. Nixon had shifted the geopolitical world balance by going to "Red" China. He had imposed wage-price controls to combat inflation. He has remade the world financial order by unilaterally changing the international monetary system. And no one at the time of the 1972 election was paying much attention to the Watergate burglary.

It might be noted that Mayor Yorty had attempted to run for president in the Democratic primaries in 1972 but had gotten nowhere and dropped out. Given the strong economy at the time and the public's general perception of Nixon's national and international endeavors, it's hard to imagine that a hypothetical Yorty candidacy in the general election would have fared better than that of the actual

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<sup>4</sup>Daniel J.B. Mitchell, "Governor Reagan's Ballot Box Budgeting: One That Got Away," *Southern California Quarterly*, Summer 2007, Vol. 89, pp. 195-227. Available at: [https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/documents/areas/fac/hrob/mitchell\\_ballot\\_box.pdf](https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/documents/areas/fac/hrob/mitchell_ballot_box.pdf).



Democratic candidate, Senator George McGovern. In any case, as a former supporter of Nixon, it's also hard to understand why Yorty believed he had a chance in the Democratic contest.

At the municipal level in LA, there was a sense in some factions of the Democratic establishment that the 1969 Yorty-Bradley contest had demonstrated that the city was not ready for a Black mayor. Although Yorty hadn't said so, it was assumed that he would run for a fourth term. And it was assumed that whatever happened in the primary, Yorty would at least be one of the top two who would emerge for the runoff election. Those Democratic politicians who felt that way – a group that included much of local organized labor – figured that the best strategy would be to find a conventional, reliable “traditional” (read White) candidate to run against Yorty. The *LA Times*, which had favored Bradley in 1969, felt the same way and it was not going to back Bradley in the primary.

Yorty – ever the pragmatist – wanted to mend relations with the Black community. After all, Bradley might not run or, if he did, he might not even emerge as one of the top two in the primary. So, there was no point in repeating the rhetoric of 1969, at least before Bradley became his opponent. In early November 1972, Yorty publicly boasted about LA's minority business development and pledged “to accelerate the economic development in our minority community.”<sup>5</sup>

The 1970 Census data were being released around that time and the Census reported that the African American population and the “Spanish language or Spanish surname” population of Los Angeles each represented about 18 percent of the total.<sup>6</sup> Yorty had been appointed head of the local federally-sponsored Manpower Planning Council earlier. As chair of the Council, he appointed various local figures as members. Such councils were largely aimed at reducing minority unemployment through training. So, the mayor had something about which to brag.

As the incumbent, the mayor – just by dealing with normal city concerns – also had a public relations advantage; what he did and said was automatically news. Annoyed by airplane noise around LAX? Yorty pledged to pursue a city lawsuit against the airlines. Interested in municipal beautification? A new tree-planting program was announced. For those concerned about Yorty's frequent trips abroad, the mayor had a rationale. He claimed that the U.S. State Department was asking him to organize a trade mission to Southeast Asia. Interested in urban planning issues? Yorty caused the City Planning Commission to redo its housing plan, indicating that federally-required developer participation in the process was lacking.

Although the focus of the November 1972 election was largely on the presidential race, LA voters in that election went along with locating the LA Police Academy in Elysian Park, which Yorty had advocated. Shortly after the election, Yorty pointed to employment practices in city employment designed to foster what today would be called a “diverse” workforce. An Advisory Affirmative Action Committee was created to encourage such efforts. Wage increases for lower-paid custodians were announced.

On the other hand, there were conflicts with the City Council over such matters as standards for streetcorner newspaper sales racks and upgrading the park surrounding the Olvera Street tourist area. It's not clear that such arcana of governance registers very much with voters, most of whom would be

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<sup>5</sup>“City's Minority Business Development Told by Yorty,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 2, 1972. The *Sentinel* was the African American newspaper of LA at the time.

<sup>6</sup>“City's Census Figures Compiled for Release,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1972.

hard pressed to explain the disputes. But what such disputes did accomplish was to keep the mayor's name in the news.

### Candidacy Announcements Begin

*"The safety of the citizens is the first issue in this campaign."*

Jesse Unruh announcing his candidacy for mayor<sup>7</sup>

By mid-November – with the excitement of the November election now past – attention began to turn to the upcoming mayoral race. News reports indicated that Jesse (Jess) Unruh would be announcing his candidacy for mayor. Unruh had been a state assemblyman from LA and had worked his way to becoming the powerful speaker of the state assembly. As such, he developed skills for controlling the California legislative agenda and rivaled Democratic Governor Pat Brown in influence. When Republican Ronald Reagan defeated Brown in 1966 and became governor, Unruh became the key Democrat at the state level.<sup>8</sup> He ran for governor in 1970 when Reagan was up for re-election. But Reagan remained popular, and Unruh lost. Running for mayor in 1973 would be a path back to power for Unruh.

For those Democratic politicians looking for a traditional candidate to run against Yorty, Unruh was clearly the kind of person they were seeking. For many years, Unruh looked the part of a Hollywood image of a political boss. He was called "Big Daddy" because of a weight problem.<sup>9</sup> But by the 1970 gubernatorial run, he had lost the excess weight and seemed to key elements of the local Democratic establishment in LA to be an attractive figure who could beat Yorty. Unruh, it might be noted, had supported incumbent Mayor Norris Poulson over Yorty back in 1961, but by 1965, he seemed to have an alliance of convenience with Yorty. That kind of "flexibility" was the mark of a traditional political operative.

Bradley saw the threat posed by an Unruh candidacy and warned against "*people seeking new careers or... public figures seeking new bases on which to build old careers.*"<sup>10</sup> He preempted the Unruh official announcement by quasi-announcing his own candidacy for mayor in the form of publicized letters to former supporters of his 1969 campaign. Yorty didn't feel the need to announce anything while this drama of potential opponents was developing. He attended a champagne reception for the LA-Berlin sister city committee.

When Unruh made his official announcement, he focused on law-and-order issues, issues that he figured would otherwise be grabbed by Yorty as in 1969, and which had been used in that race against Bradley. But whether the law-and-order issue in 1973 would have the same salience that it had in 1969 was an open question. Bradley, for his part, was talking about trying to get the City Council to support a move for state tax reform that would include a property tax limit. In any event, when asked to respond to Unruh's remarks, Yorty just retorted, "*I don't care what he said.*"<sup>11</sup> A few days later, however, he appeared on a "Crime Fighters" TV show along with former Governor Pat Brown, in effect identifying again with the law-and-order agenda.

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Emphasizing Law and Order, Unruh Enters Mayoralty Race," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1972.

<sup>8</sup>Bill Boyarsky, *Big Daddy: Jesse Unruh and the Art of Power Politics* (University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup>The name came from a character in the Tennessee Williams play and movie, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

<sup>10</sup>"Unruh Ready to Enter L.A. Mayoral Race," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1972.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Ed Meagher, "Yorty Noncommittal on Mayoral Race," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1972.

Unruh claimed that LA was being poorly managed by Yorty with duplication of services, **dirty air**, and a lack of public transit. If LA continued on its path under Yorty, said Unruh, it would "*become a city of the poor, a city of the minorities like Baltimore or Newark, N.J.*"<sup>12</sup> Holding out the threat of LA becoming a city of minorities was the kind of rhetoric Yorty might have used back in 1969. Unruh hired political consulting firm Spencer-Roberts, the firm that ran Governor Reagan's campaign against Unruh in 1970, to advise him on attracting the kind of right-leaning voters that had supported Reagan and Yorty in the past.

The fact was that Yorty could "campaign" without officially announcing his candidacy just by being mayor. He ordered a cleanup of the Venice area. He announced awards of city contracts for various public construction projects. He approved new lights for tennis courts in the San Fernando Valley. Yorty attended civic events, including a senior citizens pageant, putting him in the spotlight. There was pushback at the City Council about municipal funding of events – such as a "Salute to Volunteers" – that Yorty would be attending. "*This is a Sam Yorty campaign affair*," council member Robert Wilkinson grumbled.<sup>13</sup> Despite the grumbling, the event went ahead with Yorty as honorary chair.

Meanwhile, Yorty proclaimed a "Jerusalem Week" in honor of a Jerusalem fair being held at the Convention Center. He visited a municipal asphalt plant which featured new emissions controls to demonstrate an interest in reducing air pollution. Although he had based his original 1961 campaign on opposition to a city trash recycling mandate, he now praised a recycling project that collected cans and plastic containers. On the other hand, he warned about overly aggressive environmentalism that was pushing the U.S to becoming too dependent on Middle East oil. And he supported loaning two Black LA police officers to the Virgin Islands to help organize police services there.

There were other possible candidates considering running in 1973 including a Nixon administration official, Joseph Blatchford, who – among other positions – had been director of the Peace Corps. (Blatchford ultimately did not run.) Former Police Chief Tom Reddin – who had resigned to become a TV news commentator in 1969 – announced he would run. Reddin chose to attack Unruh as "*the Big Daddy of the legislature who doled out the money*."<sup>14</sup> As for Bradley, Reddin said he was a "*pretty good*" council member and "*a nice guy*."<sup>15</sup>

In short, Reddin assumed that Yorty would surely be one of the two survivors of the primary, that the fight was for the other slot, and that the heavy competition for that other slot would be Unruh, not Bradley. Yorty responded that if Reddin "*really wanted to serve the public, he should have stayed as chief*."<sup>16</sup> He noted that if Reddin became mayor, he would be double dipping, collecting both his mayoral salary and his city pension.

Yet another candidate known to be interested in running was City Council member Joel Wachs. Back in 1969, Bradley had formed an alliance of African American and Jewish voters and supporters and hoped

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Bill Hazlett, "Duplication in City Jobs Hit by Unruh," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1972.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Erwin Baker, "Wilkinson Accuses Yorty of Politicking in Sponsoring Fete," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1972.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Reddin Announces His Candidacy for Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1972. Reddin was a registered Democrat.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Reddin Enters Mayor's Race, Calls Unruh a 'Carpetbagger,'" *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1972.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in "Yorty Silent on Candidacy, Raps Reddin's," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1972.



to do so again. It was thought that if Wachs, who was Jewish, entered the race, he might peel some Jewish support from Bradley. Bradley, however, received some good news regarding another election. He was elected as first vice president of the National League of Cities and thus automatically the League's president in 1974.

Although he had informally announced his candidacy for mayor of LA by letter just ahead of Unruh, Bradley made a formal announcement in early December. Not to be outdone on the law-and-order issue, Bradley's announcement featured a large photo of him in a police uniform from his days with the LAPD. In response to a reporter's question, he promised that "*a careful check*" would be made of his campaign workers to exclude militants and radicals.<sup>17</sup> He accused Mayor Yorty of poor management and spoke about the need for rapid transit. Yorty meanwhile was facing a dispute with the federal government involving a cutoff of funding for LA's "Model Cities" program involving the civil service status of workers funded by the program. (The dispute was later resolved, and funding went forward.)

It appeared that Bradley's immediate problem was not Yorty (who would likely survive the primary) but Unruh. Unruh had attained some notable support among Black politicians, notably state senator Mervyn Dymally who charged Bradley with insufficient support for other African American candidates. A Black business group also was reported to be supporting Unruh.<sup>18</sup>

Although candidates were free to make announcements or float trial balloon hints about running, becoming an official candidate involved officially filing to run in the election, and filing could not take place until January. Yorty let it be known through Deputy Mayor Joseph Quinn that he would be making an announcement to run in early January. Quinn also let it be known (or claimed) that Yorty had rejected an offer from the Nixon administration to become ambassador to Mexico, that polling suggested that Yorty was perceived as doing a good job as mayor, and that Yorty viewed Reddin and Bradley as "*two ex-cops knocking each other out on law and order.*"<sup>19</sup>

Yorty himself noted that the other candidates have "*been fighting each other more than they've been fighting me and as an observer I'm very happy about it.*"<sup>20</sup> In short, his hope was that his opponents would target each other, all trying to appear as centrist, law-and-order proponents, weakening each other in the process. The result would be that a weakened opponent would end up as his rival in the runoff and be defeated. Despite saying he would be aloof from the fight, Yorty charged that Bradley had changed his council vote on a zoning matter related to a gas station after receiving a \$2,200 payoff, a charge which Bradley labeled "*a typical Yorty trick.*"<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, there were signs at the time that Yorty's strategy of letting his opponents weaken each other was playing out. The LA County Democratic Council was split between Bradley and Unruh and wasn't able to endorse either candidate. Back in 1969, the Council had united behind Bradley. Meanwhile, Yorty could go about the business of being mayor announcing such voter-pleasing

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<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Bradley Announces His 2nd Mayoral Candidacy," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1972.

<sup>18</sup>"Bradley, Unruh Mayoral Bids May Split Black Voters Again," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 7, 1972.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Yorty to Announce 4th -Term Candidacy Jan. 3, Quinn Says," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1972.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Reddin Rejects Bid to Appear **With Unruh** and Bradley," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1972.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Erwin Baker, "Yorty Revives Payoff Charge **Against Bradley**," *Los Angeles Times*, December 21, 1972.

developments such as road improvements in the San Fernando Valley and a possible second planning commission for the Valley. His wife unveiled a bust of her husband in the LA Convention Center, the location – the mayor could announce – of an annual turkey Christmas dinner for children.

Yorty could also watch more candidates enter the race. City Council member Joel Wachs, who earlier had hinted at becoming a candidate, announced informally that he would run. In doing so, Wachs, who represented the Westside, noted his role in opposing oil drilling in Pacific Palisades, which had become a hot environmental issue at the time. Whether that local issue was enough for a viable citywide candidacy was an open question, however. Also announcing was a former conservative TV commentator, Robert Dornan, who said he would appeal to Republican voters *"as a dark horse."*<sup>22</sup>

### The Race Begins

*"I'm No. 1 in line to sign up, I'm No. 1 in the polls, and I expect to be No. 1 on Election Day."*

Tom Bradley on filing official papers  
to run in the 1973 mayoral race<sup>23</sup>

One of the byproducts of the 1972 presidential election was that Democrat George McGovern's candidacy did not excite minority voters. Many did not vote in that election and, under the rules in California of that era, not voting in an election would purge a voter from the registration list for the next election. Black districts – districts on which Bradley depended – were especially hard hit by the purge. The impact was less in the San Fernando Valley districts where Yorty had his strength. Thus, Bradley's first priority was a voter registration drive, a prospect termed a *"damned expensive"* campaign expense by a Bradley aide.<sup>24</sup>

That problem was at least a known factor in the election. But there were other bits of information emerging. While it might have been assumed that Yorty would be one of the top two in the primary, some early polling suggested that the top two might be Bradley and Reddin. The problem with such polling is that as the year 1973 began, voters had yet to shift attention to the city race. Moreover, it might turn out that the issue of the day – which had been assumed by political consultants to be law and order – might be some other concern or concerns.

Law and order had always been assumed to be an issue for White voters. But some early polling suggested that issues such as air pollution was now of greater importance to them. It was Black residents, the polling suggested, that were worried about crime, particularly gang violence in schools. Thus, Bradley – as a former police officer – might be able to make a more effective appeal to such voters than former Police Chief Reddin or Unruh. Bradley supported giving teachers an electronic device to call

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Dornan, Ex-TV Personality, Enters L.A. Mayoral Contest," *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1972. Dornan later succeeded in becoming a congressional representative in 1985 covering such areas as Santa Monica. When that district became liberal due in part to the rent control issue, he moved to the more conservative Orange County and was elected to congress there, taking office in 1993. But changing demographics and political trends in his new district eventually led to his defeat.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "All of Top Challengers File in Race for Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1973.

<sup>24</sup>Bill Boyarsky, "Bradley Has Task – Reregister Blacks Who Failed to Vote in '72," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1973.



for help quickly in case of violence in the classroom. Knowledge that such a system existed, he said, would also be a "*psychological deterrence*" to those who might commit school violence.<sup>25</sup>

As an example of changing priorities, California voters in the 1972 general election had enacted Proposition 20 creating the Coastal Commission, suggesting that environmental issues were becoming important. In the LA area, such concerns expressed themselves as opposition to oil drilling along the coast and the beginning of what was later termed the slow-growth movement. The Yorty campaign had considered hiring the Whitaker and Baxter consulting firm, the same firm that had defeated state health insurance in the 1940s and derailed the EPIC campaign of Upton Sinclair for governor in the 1930s. But Whitaker and Baxter had failed to defeat Prop 20 and the Yorty campaign decided to seek other assistance.

All of the major challengers to Yorty – Bradley, Unruh, and Reddin – filed papers on the first day such filings were possible, January 3rd. The lesser candidates, including Wachs, Dornan, and Blatchford, did not immediately file. Wachs, in making a formal announcement that he would run, acknowledged that some of his own staff were unenthusiastic about his prospects. Wachs and Dornan ultimately filed for the mayoral race; Blatchford never did.<sup>26</sup>

Mayor Yorty made an official announcement of his candidacy the day after the other major candidates filed and subsequently filed his own papers. He said he would stress his accomplishments as mayor in the campaign and wouldn't respond to charges of his rivals, an unlikely pledge. And only a few days later, Yorty attacked Reddin for not being sufficiently supportive of him as police chief. Reddin responded that during the 1969 campaign, he had locked up Bradley's police personnel records so that Yorty operatives would not try to make use of them. Given the controversy, the current police chief, Ed Davis, ordered both the Bradley and the Reddin files locked up. Bradley subsequently released his own copies of the records.

Yorty did admit that it was unlikely he could obtain 50%+ of the votes in the primary, and thus avoid a runoff. But, as noted above, as the incumbent mayor, Yorty had an automatic platform to create news and attention which would be helpful to his campaign. Shortly after his candidacy announcement, for example, he proclaimed "Young Filmmakers Week." And he proclaimed "Adolph Zukor Day," in honor of the famed filmmaker's 100th birthday. Bradley, meanwhile, pivoted away from law-and-order matters and focused on a controversial proposal for oil drilling in the Pacific Palisades. He charged that a lobbyist for Occidental Petroleum had gotten access to city files and changed and removed documents related to the proposal.

Unruh, however, stayed on the law-and-order issue and charged that Bradley was "*weak on the law enforcement issues*" and that he was associated with radicals. In effect, he echoed Yorty's themes from the 1969 election.<sup>27</sup> But there was no guarantee that what worked in 1969 would have the same

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<sup>25</sup>Jack McCurdy, "City Schools to Try Electronic Alarm Devices," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1973.

<sup>26</sup>A minor candidate, Malbour Watson, filed on a platform of abolishing the position of mayor and converting LA to a city manager system. There were rumors that Watson, an African American, had been encouraged to run by other candidates in an effort to take votes from Bradley. However, given Watson's platform, it seems more likely that he just wanted the publicity that would result from filing for the office. After the primary, he endorsed Yorty. As is often the case, there were many non-serious candidates who filed, a total of thirteen including Yorty, Bradley, Unruh, Reddin, Wachs, and Dornan.

<sup>27</sup>"Bradley Weaker Now, Unruh Says," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1973.

resonance in 1973. And in fact, Yorty was being peripherally pulled into a bribery case in Santa Barbara County.

A singer named Phil Regan had been arrested for attempting to bribe a Santa Barbara County supervisor in a zoning matter. Regan, as it turned out, had some involvement with Yorty and at one point had driven Yorty to meet with a fellow named John Alessio in a federal prison. Alessio – described as a racetrack baron – was in prison for tax evasion. There was a charge that the meeting had something to do with campaign funds which Yorty denied, saying he met with Alessio because he felt sorry for him. It was a complicated story involving other political figures that simply didn't smell right, whatever the details or truth. And it meant that from time to time during the campaign, new developments in the Regan affair would appear in the news. Thus, when the Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors voted against the zoning matter, Yorty's name was again raised.

Yorty's sometime position of staying aloof from the fray and letting the other candidates attack each other had its limits. At a debate with the other candidates present, Yorty sent the president of the Board of Harbor Commissioners to represent him, rather than appearing himself. In fact, the other candidates focused on failings of the Yorty administration. As various problems such as smog and the lack of rapid transit were raised, his spokesperson kept arguing that such issues were beyond the mayor's control. While it is true that LA has a weak mayoral system compared with other major cities, saying that there is not much the mayor could do about important issues of the day was not a great debating tactic.

Moreover, Yorty was known for commenting on foreign affairs and other matters not generally within mayoral control. At a time when public opinion was shifting towards environmental concerns, Yorty attacked environmentalists, including those opposing coastal oil drilling. *"Some of these people are so selfish,"* he said, *"that they don't even want to look at a platform out off the coast for twenty years to tide us over this period when we're going to have a crisis in the shortage of energy."*<sup>28</sup>

By the end of January, Unruh, Reddin, and Dornan were still focused on the law-and-order issue, trying to out-Yorty Yorty on the assumption that the 1969 contest was being repeated. Among those three, Unruh had the support of organized labor officials which also looked back at 1969 and that feared going with Bradley again would produce a Yorty victory.<sup>29</sup> Bradley's campaign was focused on improved city management (not a sexy topic), lack of rapid transit, and environmental concerns such as oil drilling (matters of growing voter concern and thus increasingly sexy topics).

Bradley campaign officials released poll data indicating that Bradley was the strongest candidate with Reddin and Yorty roughly tied for second place. In addition, they claimed that union members (as opposed to labor officials) favored Bradley and showed little support for Unruh.<sup>30</sup> Wachs was already being branded as an also-ran and had little in the way of campaign funds to put forward whatever positions he wanted to take. He barely registered in the poll. While polls produced for campaigns can

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<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Yorty Speech Attacks Ecology 'Extremists,'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1973.

<sup>29</sup>Organized labor was largely composed of AFL-CIO unions represented by the LA County Federation of Labor. At the time, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union was outside the AFL-CIO due to disagreements over the Vietnam War. The UAW did not endorse anyone in the primary. Note that at this point in history, there was a significant auto production industry in the LA area.

<sup>30</sup>Bill Boyarsky, "Poll Shows Bradley Holds Lead in Race for Mayor, Aides Say," *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1973.

always be viewed with skepticism as biased, in this case – with hindsight – the poll results were prescient.

### What's the Issue?

*"Just another attempted smear."*

Mayor Sam Yorty referring to charges  
he had a conflict of interest related to two oil firms<sup>31</sup>

Given the mix of mayoral candidates, the challenge became determining what issue(s) really mattered to voters. The assumption that THE issue would be law and order and that 1973 would be a repeat of 1969 was increasing looking shaky a month into the race. Unruh had relied on Spencer-Roberts Associates, a firm that normally worked on Republican campaigns, figuring that what he needed was conservative help. By early February, the firm was fired. The new manager of the Unruh campaign complained that *"if the election were held today, he's not first or second," referring to Unruh.*<sup>32</sup>

If law and order in 1973 was not going to be as central an issue as it was in 1969, Reddin in particular – running as a former police chief – was without the issue that would most justify his candidacy. He was left to flail about looking for something else. Reddin charged that a former, and now-deceased, Yorty administration official had once offered him a \$10,000 campaign contribution in exchange for a promise to appoint him to the Police Commission if Reddin were elected. Yorty suggested that Reddin had picked on a dead man who could not deny the accusation.

The oil drilling issue was becoming more salient, undermining Yorty's complaints about excessive environmentalism. A move in the City Council began to put a measure on the May 29 ballot (the runoff election) that would restrict coastal oil drilling. It appeared that Yorty was listed as a director of an oil drilling firm, a fact pointed out by Reddin. The firm's president denied that Yorty was a director and called the listing an error. But Yorty did have some kind of relationship, never clear, with two oil firms. Like the Santa Barbara bribery case, the issue didn't smell right, and anything related to oil immediately invoked the coastal drilling issue. It raised the specter of some kind of conflict of interest on the part of the mayor.

One component of the 1969 contest which Bradley did heavily count on was continuation of the Black-Jewish alliance that was an essential feature of his prior campaign. As a result, there was an incentive for other candidates, including Yorty, to try and undermine it. A major issue of that time was the plight of Soviet Jewry. Jews, hoping to escape antisemitism, were generally blocked from emigrating from the Soviet Union, so-called "refuseniks." At one point, the mayor of Moscow visited LA and was greeted by Yorty. A Jewish group wanted Yorty to hand the visitor a letter protesting the situation, and Yorty grew testy when reporters asked him if he had passed on the letter. Later, he said he did pass on the letter. But the testy behavior tended to undercut the gesture.

By the end of February, with a little more than a month to go before the primary, law and order was clearly not going to be the winning issue, environmental concerns were becoming more important, and

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<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Scoffs at His Opponents, Claims They Can't Find Issues," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1973.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Aide Tells Why Unruh Fired His Campaign Chiefs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1973.



the Yorty campaign was being **weakened** by these and other developments.<sup>33</sup> In addition, since all the candidates had initially assumed **law and order** would be a key issue, they all had taken law-and-order positions, thus neutralizing each other. Without law and order, Reddin had no special base of support. And there was even a legal issue as to whether he could list his occupation on the ballot as a *former* police chief since that designation was not his current occupation. Dornan would also have a limited appeal, absent a law-and-order focus.

Unruh's campaign clearly had stumbled. However, what Unruh did have was the support of organized labor. And Wachs, already a long shot, was trying to put his name in public consciousness with a TV advertising campaign that would consume most of the money he had managed to raise.<sup>33</sup> Once the TV money was gone without producing a notable jump in voter interest, Wachs' campaign would be finished.

### Closing In On the Primary

*"This is the most honest and efficient city government in the nation."*

Mayor Sam Yorty<sup>34</sup>

With law and order fading as an issue, Reddin picked up on Yorty's seeming association with oil companies. He released documentation of the Yorty link. Yorty complained that the documents were stolen. Reddin, he said, *"has either received stolen property or connived to get it stolen."*<sup>35</sup> The *LA Times* editorialized on the coastal drilling issue by suggesting that the City Council put a proposition on the ballot letting voters decide on whether there should be drilling. Yorty – who favored drilling – would be hard pressed to oppose such a suggestion.<sup>36</sup> The *LA Times'* editorial board surely understood that a let-the-people-decide was an indirect slam on Yorty.

Yorty was also getting bad news from the federal government. The Model Cities Program in LA and other federally-funded programs were going to have budget cuts. Bradley pushed for a lawsuit to challenge the cuts. Yorty's plan to fix up the Venice Canals died when some local property owners opposed it and brought legal action. Once the Unruh campaign had received the endorsement of organized labor – making Unruh's outlook for the primary brighter – his fundraising picked up. He was able to hire a political mailing firm that reputedly could precisely target particular groups, notably "Jewish-surname" voters that Unruh hoped to pull from Bradley. (The use of computerized data bases in political campaigns was relatively new at the time. The Yorty campaign was also using the new technology.)

There were also mystery mailers sent without return addresses or any indication of which campaign had sent them. One, sent to Black ministers, said that *"Bradley quits Christian post to satisfy demands of Jewish leaders."* It cited a news article that indicated that Bradley had resigned as an honorary chair of a

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<sup>33</sup>Wachs did not have a professional campaign manager. Rather, he had a friend who had managed his successful campaign for UCLA student president when he was an undergraduate.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in "City Hall Best in U.S., Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1973.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Yorty Says Oil Firm Letters Revealed by Reddin **Were Stolen**," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1973.

<sup>36</sup>"Let the Voters Decide on Oil," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1973.

Christian group, but the article in question did not attribute the resignation to "Jewish leaders." The mailer's purpose appeared to be driving a wedge in Bradley's Black-Jewish support.

Unruh denied the mailing came from his campaign. The individual responsible for the mailing had at one time been associated with Yorty. But the mailers were mainly aimed at comparing Unruh favorably relative to Bradley. He would not disclose the campaign source.<sup>37</sup> But in response to the controversy, Unruh said the mailers would be revised. Bradley said that Unruh had "*got his hand caught in the cookie jar*."<sup>38</sup> Bradley also charged that Unruh's campaign was planning to send another divisive mailing, this time to Jewish voters.

#### Little Public Attention

*"His personality and attitude I don't like. He looks like a gangster. And I also don't like someone to presuppose that as a union man, I would vote for Unruh."*

Union painter saying he planned to vote for Reddin<sup>39</sup>

A Field Poll was commissioned by the *LA Times* that appeared two weeks before the April 3rd election. It was taken March 10-15, 1973, and it suggested that – as in 1969 – the result of the primary would be a runoff of Bradley vs. Yorty.<sup>40</sup>

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**Field Poll Results:**  
**March 10-15**  
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Bradley	26%
Yorty	21%
Unruh	13%
Reddin	12%
Wachs	5%
Others	1%
Undecided	22%

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The poll also indicated that in a projected runoff with Bradley as a candidate, Bradley would beat any of the other major rivals.<sup>41</sup> However, it is important to note that half of those individuals polled could not name a major candidate who were running without the aid of the pollster. And many respondents, even with the names provided, were undecided. Thus, the key challenge for the candidates was to hang on to

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<sup>37</sup>Kenneth Reich, "Bradley Labels Unruh Mailout to Blacks 'Vicious, Outrageous,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1973.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Unruh Aides Urge Bradley to Disavow Anti-Semitism Letters," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1973.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, Voter Reaction to Mayor's Race: Dissatisfaction, Boredom, *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1973.

<sup>40</sup>Mervin D. Field, "Mayoral Race Shapes Up as Rerun of 1969," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1973. The Field poll was in many respects THE public opinion poll of California. The poll was established in 1947 and ceased to operate in 2016. However, many results from the poll can be found at [archive.org](http://archive.org) through its "Wayback machine."

<sup>41</sup>Mervin D. Field, "Bradley Projected as Winner Against Any Runoff Opponent," *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1973.

the voters they had and try and pull votes from the undecided group as well as from the others in the race.

Despite the fluidity in the contest, Bradley said he was *"especially pleased"* with the poll results. And he said that he didn't think racial issues that were raised against him in 1969 would work in 1973.<sup>42</sup> He resumed his strategy of talking about governance and policy issues, arguing, for example that more competition was needed in the taxicab industry. (The Yellow Cab had a city-granted monopoly of service in key areas of Los Angeles at the time.) Reddin went on promoting law and order. But he widened his topics to include complaints about liberal donors to the Bradley campaign and to the Health Department's requirements for labeling fish.

Yorty blamed Bradley for raising racial issues in 1969. Repeating a theme from 1969, he declared that *"forces from the outside are trying to take over the city."*<sup>43</sup> He got into a scrap with the City Council regarding funding for the Board of Grants, an agency set up to distribute funds to various programs. He also received news that the federal government would be slashing funding for the city's summer youth jobs program. The Santa Barbara zoning case trial, which peripherally involved Yorty, concluded with a guilty verdict of the defendant, another reminder of a murky set of circumstances involving the mayor.

Unruh explicitly pointed to the fact that half of those polled couldn't name the candidates. Now that he had established *"the kind of coalition that... is necessary"* – likely referring to organized labor - his campaign could begin afresh.<sup>44</sup> Unruh said his late blooming new campaign would focus on his long experience in getting things done in the state legislature. Wachs cited support of the city's fire chief for his (Wachs') efforts to obtain more money for the sale of certain Fire Department property, leading the chief to complain that he had not supported any candidate in the race.

When the Fire Department matter failed to catch on, Wachs' attacked two contributors to the Bradley campaign as being linked to Las Vegas gambling interests. It appeared that the two were real estate developers with interests in projects in Las Vegas that contained gambling facilities. Since gambling is legal in Nevada and a central element in its tourism, many buildings there contain at least slot machines. However, the gambling charge did attract some attention in the race.

Given the fluidity of an election that had not yet brought about substantial public passion, the candidates were scrambling to find whatever support they could find. A few votes here or there might be enough to bring a candidate into second place, even if the Field Poll suggested that it would be a Bradley-Yorty contest. At the time, racial/ethnic issues in Los Angeles tended to be seen in Black-White terms even though it was estimated that about 18% of the city's population was Mexican-American. Although 18% is a big number, in elections it was reduced to 5-6% due to non-citizenship, a concentration of the population below age 18, and a low propensity to register and vote of those eligible. But with the April 3rd primary vote nearing, Unruh in particular was hoping that unions with large Mexican-American membership would pull votes for him.

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<sup>42</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Bradley 'Pleased' Poll Sees Him in Rematch with Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1973.

<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "'Outside Forces' Trying to Take Over City, Yorty Says," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1973.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Unruh Points to Record of Getting Things Done," *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1973.



A second Field Poll taken March 24-28 suggested that all of the last minute campaigning hadn't changed the basic result that the top two finishers would be Bradley and Yorty.<sup>45</sup> And it suggested that Bradley had been most successful in attracting voters who were previously undecided.

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#### Field Poll Results

	March 24-28	March 10-15
Bradley	33%	26%
Yorty	23%	21%
Unruh	11%	13%
Reddin	13%	12%
Wachs	4%	5%
Others	1%	1%
Undecided	15%	22%

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There was the usual last minute barrage of mailers, charges, and countercharges. Unruh indicated that he might not support Bradley if the contest turned out to be Bradley-Yorty. And, as those not doing well in opinion polls are fond of saying, the only poll that counts is the actual election. Still, voters had other things to think about. Inflation had returned as a national issue. A combination of the remnants of the Nixon administration's price controls program and underlying inflation produced a meat shortage, with empty supermarket freezers and a call for a consumer boycott endorsed by the City Council.

Although the *LA Times* had editorially endorsed Bradley in the 1969 runoff, it was noncommittal in the 1973 primary, saying that Bradley, Reddin, and Unruh were all acceptable, basically an anyone-but-Yorty stance. The *LA Herald-Examiner*, the second paper in the city and by then the more conservative, endorsed Yorty.<sup>46</sup> The *Advocate*, a publication aimed at the gay community, supported Unruh. It acknowledged that Wachs was a supporter of gay rights but said he couldn't win, and that Bradley had been too cautious on gay issues whereas Unruh had been more supportive.<sup>47</sup>

#### The Primary

*"I don't think race will be an issue."*

Sam Yorty commenting on the upcoming runoff<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Mervin D. Field, "Bradley Increases Lead, Reddin Edges Up in Latest Poll," *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1972.

<sup>46</sup>The *Herald-Examiner* was in the midst of a multiyear strike at the time which led to a significant circulation decline. The paper went out of business in 1989. Its downtown building, considered an architecturally notable structure, still stands in downtown LA. The building deteriorated but was restored and currently houses a branch of Arizona State University.

<sup>47</sup>"Vote for Jess Unruh," *Advocate*, April 11, 1973. (The primary was April 3, but the newspaper was not a daily and would be on the newsstands at that time.) Wachs was a closeted gay man at the time, but the newspaper was probably aware of his sexual orientation.

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Bradley, Yorty in Runoff; Unruh 3rd," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1973.

*"The mayor says he wants to talk about his record and so do I."*

Tom Bradley commenting on the upcoming runoff<sup>49</sup>

*"I find it pretty hard to support either one of them right now."*

Jesse Unruh referring to Bradley and Yorty  
after he failed to survive the primary<sup>50</sup>

*"I just wasn't a good candidate."*

Tom Reddin commenting on his poor performance in the primary<sup>51</sup>

The Field Poll results predicted the outcome of the primary, although the poll had underestimated the ultimate voting strength of Unruh.<sup>52</sup>

	Primary April 3rd	Field Poll March 24-28
Bradley	35%	33%
Yorty	29%	23%
Unruh	17%	11%
Reddin	13%	13%
Wachs	4%	4%
Others	2%	1%
Undecided	na	15%
na = not applicable		

Still, as in 1969, it was Bradley in first place and Yorty in second. The gap between them, however, was smaller than in the 1969 primary, suggesting at that point that a hard-fought runoff would be ahead.<sup>53</sup>

Unruh was later said to have never gotten over his failure to come in at least second in the primary and blamed news coverage of his campaign.<sup>54</sup> However, part of the reason for his loss may simply be that he was perceived as a state-level politician, given his past career as speaker of the state assembly and unsuccessful candidate for governor. He reportedly had complained to aides during the campaign that he felt somewhat lost in municipal politics. *"You'd think that after twenty years in politics, I'd know how I*

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>"Election Results," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1973. Includes 3,168 precincts out of 3,169.

<sup>53</sup>In the 1969 primary, the gap was 42% for Bradley vs. 26% for Yorty.

<sup>54</sup>Bill Boyarsky, *Big Daddy Jesse Unruh and the Art of Power Politics* (University of California Press, 2008), pp. 208-209.

*am doing, but I don't,"* he reportedly said.<sup>55</sup> Despite the setback, Unruh ran for state treasurer in 1974 and won. It created a new long-term career for him in the days before term limits; he died in that office in 1987.

Perhaps if Unruh had foreseen that he had a future in state politics, he would have stopped grumbling about Bradley. Two weeks after the primary – although he had not endorsed Yorty – he was harsh in his judgment of Bradley. *"I don't agree with many of the things that Sam Yorty does," he said. But when Sam Yorty wants to do something, he is reasonably competent at the process. I have grave doubts about Tom Bradley in that respect.*"<sup>56</sup>

Tom Reddin had no further political career after the primary and died in 2004. He expressed a belief that his poor showing was because he did not sufficiently push the law-and-order theme, even though his wife had pushed him to *"mention murder and rape as a code-word for security."*<sup>57</sup> He said the perception was that Yorty was better at using law and order as a proxy for the racial issue.

Joel Wachs continued on the LA City Council, becoming president of the Council at one point. In that capacity, he became acting mayor whenever then-mayor Tom Bradley was out of the state. But that was as close as he ever got to be the actual mayor. He ran for mayor unsuccessfully two more times.

The *LA Times* had told voters that Bradley, Unruh, and Reddin were all good candidates before the primary. But since the other two were out of the running, it supported Bradley in the runoff citing his *"integrity and initiative."*<sup>58</sup> The *Times* was back to the stance it had in 1969.

In the aftermath of the primary, it might have seemed likely that the Reddin vote would shift to Yorty. But although Yorty thought the Unruh vote would go to him, that result was not a foregone conclusion. To the extent that the Unruh vote was driven by the endorsement of organized labor, it might well switch to Bradley, since labor was likely to endorse Bradley in the runoff. The Wachs vote would also likely go to Bradley. However, to get Wachs' formal endorsement, Bradley eventually had to return the "gambling" money to its contributors. \*

The outlook as seen immediately after the primary was that the runoff would be a toss-up. And, as always, Yorty had the advantage of being in the news – free publicity – for doing his mayoral duties such as submitting a city budget, announcing additional bus service in the San Fernando Valley, issuing a proclamation honoring the Kelly Pipe Company on its 75th anniversary, and throwing out the first ball at a new high school baseball stadium.

### **The Runoff Campaign Begins**

*"I don't think it's racism for me to state the fact that Bradley gets a big bloc vote from the Black community... But I think I am entitled to the Black vote because my administration has done more for minorities than has Bradley."*

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<sup>55</sup>Quoted in David Shaw, "Unruh – as End Grew Near He Sought to Avoid Humiliation," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1973.

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Tendayi Kumbula, "Unruh Undecided on Supporting Bradley," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1973.

<sup>57</sup>Kenneth Reich, "Reddin Believes He Lost Out Due to Racial Undercurrent," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1973.

<sup>58</sup>"The Vote for New Leadership...," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1973.



Bradley's strategy was partly to **try and focus on Big Issues** of the city and to avoid the kind of defensive responses to charges by Yorty that occurred in 1969. The idea of slow growth was developing in that era. At the time of the 1970 Census, LA City's population was 2.8 million. Bradley proposed changes in zoning to limit the population in the future to a maximum of four million (about where it is at this writing). He proposed "downzoning," i.e., rezoning areas designated for multifamily housing to single family.

As many readers of this chapter will know, this downzoning approach is exactly the opposite of the trend in California today in the face of perceived housing shortages. Nowadays, the trend in California is upzoning, i.e., voiding single-family zones in favor of multi-family. Preserving single-family zoning is often tarred as NIMBYism. But at the time, Bradley's proposal "to begin now to develop some kind of a gradual plan that would stabilize the growth of this city" was viewed as an enlightened planning agenda.<sup>60</sup> It's a useful lesson to recall; what is seen as progressive in one era can be seen as retrograde in later period.

Another longstanding Bradley issue was the absence of good public transit in LA. He called for the dismantling of the Southern California Rapid Transit District (RTD) and its replacement by a revamped agency, something that didn't happen until the tail end of Bradley's final term as mayor in 1993. As expected, Bradley received the official endorsement of organized labor as it pivoted from Unruh. The secretary-treasurer of the LA County Federation of Labor termed Bradley "the best friend of the labor movement."<sup>61</sup>

Both the Yorty and Bradley campaigns began to negotiate dates for TV debates. One date was set for May 26th, shortly before the May 29th runoff. The *LA Times* called for more debates saying that – without much evidence – political candidates are less likely to make "irresponsible attacks" in the presence of their opponents.<sup>62</sup> There was little doubt that the *Times* viewed Yorty as the one who might otherwise make such attacks. Soon after the editorial, an additional date of May 7 was announced. And then another non-televvised debate was set for May 1.

One attack from Yorty involved a Bradley family lawsuit. Bradley was the trustee of life insurance proceeds from his late brother's estate, and he was directed in his brother's will to hold the proceeds until his brother's sons (Bradley's nephews) reached age 25. The sons filed a lawsuit against Bradley and eventually there was an out-of-court settlement. Yorty said Bradley had tried to steal the money. Bradley called Yorty's interpretation a "big lie technique."<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, the Santa Barbara zoning case in which Yorty was peripherally entangled bubbled up again when the convicted defendant didn't show up for a probation hearing.

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<sup>59</sup>Quoted in Bill Robertson, "Is Racism Surfacing In Bradley-Yorty Race?" *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 19, 1973.

<sup>60</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "Bradley Advocates Population Lid of 4 Million in L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1973.

<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Kenneth Reich, "AFL-CIO Group Roars Approval of Bradley for Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1973. The Teamsters union – which was outside of the AFL-CIO after being expelled for corruption – did not endorse Bradley.

<sup>62</sup>"The More Debates the Better," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1973.

<sup>63</sup>"Bradley Accuses Yorty of Using 'Big Lie' Technique," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 26, 1973.

The two candidates met for the May 1 non-televised debate before a group of architects, a preview of what was likely to occur in the later TV debates. Apparently anticipating Bradley's theme that Yorty was a do-nothing mayor, Yorty attacked Bradley for being a do-nothing council representative, pointing to a lack of parks, low-quality housing, and a high rate of disease in Bradley's district. Bradley accused Yorty of hiding behind the weak powers of the mayor as an excuse for not tackling city problems. Both candidates favored building rapid transit, but Yorty pointed to the fact that the RTD was a state agency, and the money would have to come from the state or federal government. Bradley charged that as mayor for twelve years, Yorty could have done more to develop a transit system.

In the post-debate period, the issue of oil drilling in the Pacific Palisades area arose. Occidental Petroleum had obtained the site for its proposed drilling through a land swap approved by city officials. Bradley said there had been "*deceit and deception*" involved in the land swap involving Yorty administration officials.<sup>64</sup> Yorty claimed that other city officials had been involved, he personally had nothing to do with the deal. Nonetheless, he argued that it was a good deal for the city. Bradley introduced a measure at the City Council to cancel the deal.

The first TV debate on May 7th mirrored the back-and-forth charges of the debate before the architects' group. Bradley brought up the Yorty connection to the now-convicted Santa Barbara zoning bribery defendant. Yorty raised the issue of the contributions to the Bradley campaign of the Las Vegas gamblers, although by this time Bradley had returned the donations. And there was back-and-forth regarding the litigation over the estate of Bradley's brother. Yorty charged that Bradley had prolonged the Vietnam War by opposing it. Bradley noted that Yorty had welcomed the mayor of Moscow to the city at a time when Jews were being refused exit permits to leave the Soviet Union.

The TV critic of the LA Times characterized the debate as a "*mudslinging exhibition*."<sup>65</sup> During the debate, the moderator of the debate had trouble maintaining control and at one point stopped the proceedings and went to a commercial. Yorty, reported the critic, ignored the agreed-upon rules of the debate, and talked over Bradley.

The LA Times was made nervous by the first TV debate because of the personal attacks and lack of substance. It seemed to be counseling Bradley – its choice for mayor – to tone it down in the future and avoid "*an extravagance of rhetoric*." The emphasis should turn away from "*name-calling to leadership*." In effect, it was advising Bradley not to try to act like Yorty.<sup>66</sup> Shortly after the editorial, Bradley seemed to endorse the advice saying, "*I am quite prepared as of this moment to stop that kind of [negative] campaigning*" and that he "*want(ed) to talk about the issues*."<sup>67</sup>

However, by that time, another non-televised debate had taken place at the Tarzana Chamber of Commerce. This one featured an opening prayer by a minister asking God to see that the debaters focused on issues of concern to city residents. As it turned out, however, both candidates arrived late and didn't hear the prayer. And no divine intervention occurred that prevented the kind of charges and

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<sup>64</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "New Evidence Shows Deceit in Oil Drilling Case, Bradley Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1973.

<sup>65</sup>Cecil Smith, "Round One of the Yorty-Bradley Debates," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1973.

<sup>66</sup>"Mud in the Mayoralty Race," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1973.

<sup>67</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Councilman Promises to Discuss Issues, Urges an End to Mudslinging," *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1973.

countercharges heard at the prior debates. Yorty again charged that Bradley had tried to steal his nephews' inheritance. Bradley spoke about a story which was "*talked about in the halls*" when Yorty had made some critical remarks about then-Police Chief William Parker. Parker had supposedly dumped a briefcase of incriminating material about Yorty on Yorty's desk to hush him up.<sup>68</sup>

### The Race Continues to Heat Up

*"(Yorty) should be protecting the jobs of men and women in Los Angeles and not playing footsie around the world with foreign officials who only care about selling us cheaper goods that put our manufacturers out of business."*

Councilmember Tom Bradley<sup>69</sup>

Exactly where the candidates stood with voters at this point was not clear. However, a Field Poll suggested that in late April/early May, while both candidates had picked up votes from those knocked out by the primary, the gap between Bradley and Yorty had narrowed.

	Field Poll	
	April 28	Primary
	- May 3	April 3
Bradley	42%	35%
Yorty	39%	29%
Undecided	19%	na
Other candidates	na	36%

na = not applicable

<sup>68</sup>Carl Greenberg, "Yorty, Bradley Hurl New Charges," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1973.

<sup>69</sup>Quoted in Carl Greenberg, "Bradley Campaigns at Harbor, Attacks Yorty's Foreign Trips," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1973.



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Field Poll Results: April 28 - May 3

	Bradley	Yorty	Undecided
Anglo	36%	45%	19%
Black	71%	4%	24%
Spanish-speaking	39%	31%	30%
Union members	48%	34%	19%
Nonunion	39%	41%	20%
Protestant	35%	47%	18%
Catholic	34%	48%	18%
Jewish	55%	23%	22%
Other religion/none	51%	27%	22%
Men	43%	37%	20%
Women	39%	41%	20%

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Within the poll results, although Bradley was ahead, his lead depended heavily on Black and Jewish voters. Union members, perhaps reflecting the endorsement of union leaders, favored Bradley at this point. But the large proportion of undecided voters in all groups, even African Americans, suggested that the post-primary contest was still wide open. A second televised debate was scheduled for May 13 and the question was whether it would be a repeat of the first debate with charges and countercharges or whether it would be a calmer, issues-oriented affair.

The verdict after the second, more civil TV debate was that it had indeed been calmer than the first. For example, there was discussion of developing a rapid transit system. But even if calmer, the two candidates differed on whether it was the mayor (Yorty) or the City Council (of which Bradley was a member) that should be blamed for the lack of transit progress. Bradley argued that more freeways should not be built and that there should be high-speed freeway lanes for buses. Yorty argued that freeways moved cars efficiently. Bradley opposed oil drilling along the coast, pointing to the dangers of pollution and oil spills; Yorty said there was a national fuel shortage and drilling should proceed.

While the debate's style was more civil, it is not clear that the TV debating format really allows deep exploration of the issues along the lines that policy wonks might enjoy, although the *LA Times* – which had criticized the first debate – wrote approvingly of the second. An editorial said it provided “*revelations of substantial differences in the way the two men look at problems that both agree will confront the city.*”<sup>70</sup> In any event, the new calm didn't last long. At the Westside Jewish Community Center, the two candidates confronted each other with Yorty stating that he was “*a long-time friend of the Jewish people*” and the audience should “*think about your traditional friends before you close your minds in this election.*” Bradley pointed to a recent police arrest of “*some Jewish ladies playing cards for charity*” as a waste of police resources.<sup>71</sup>

The next feud involved Yorty's TV and mail advertising. Yorty referred to an interview in which Bradley's campaign chair was quoted as saying “*any White born this society is a racist of some form or another.*”

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<sup>70</sup>“Less of a Show, More of a Show,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1973.

<sup>71</sup>Both quotes from Richard Bergholz, “Yorty, Bradley Revert to Slam-Bang Debating,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1973.

The chair, Max Palevsky, denied making the statement and hinted at libel suits in a letter to TV stations. Bradley complained about a Yorty mailer that declared that Bradley was "*pro-Black Panther*."<sup>72</sup> After a lawsuit was filed, the mailer was withdrawn and revised. Councilmember Wachs – now in the Bradley camp – pointed to monetary contributions to the Yorty campaign from wives of city officials, a seeming evasion of a state law banning contributions from one city official to another. Former governor Pat Brown subsequently endorsed Bradley, citing the donation issue.

Meanwhile Yorty repeated charges made in the 1969 that radicals were behind the Bradley campaign. "*They're all kept pretty much in the background. But it's still the same combination. The radicals are still in there.*"<sup>73</sup> Bradley pointed to the fact that Yorty back in 1961 favored a two-term limit for mayors but now was running for a fourth term. He said that he (Bradley) agreed with the old Yorty position favoring a two-term limit. (Of course, Bradley, once in office, was to serve five terms.) In response to a reporter's question, Bradley declined to support a two-term limit for City Council members saying the council wouldn't support putting the issue on the ballot.

### A Week to Go

*"People will not be motivated by Yorty's very negative campaign."*

Nelson Rising, Bradley campaign advisor<sup>74</sup>

As the campaign reached its last stretch, it was widely expected that Mayor Yorty would repeat his strategy of the 1969 election. Indeed, because of that expectation, he didn't have to do much more than what he had already done. For example, his stating that much of the Black vote would go to Bradley was, on its face, a neutral statement that was evident from polling data. But any time Yorty mentioned race, it could be seen as a flashback/reminder to everyone of what he had said in 1969. Statements by Yorty that "*I'm not asking White people to vote for me because I'm White*" could be read as meaning precisely the opposite, i.e., raising White fears and asking them to vote for him.<sup>75</sup>

The *LA Times* conceded Yorty's point that the city was well run in comparison to some other big cities but attributed that fact to the "*professional cadre of municipal employees*," not to Yorty. Under Yorty, the *Times* said, there had been "*drift, fragmentation, and division*." Bradley, according to the *Times*, had the capacity to lead on such issues as rapid transit, downzoning to achieve slow growth, limitation of coastal oil drilling, and "*attacking the problems of central-city decay or citywide violence, fighting for better housing for the poor and the old (and) for secure and crime-free neighborhoods*."<sup>76</sup>

This stance clearly moved the *Times* from its earlier pre-primary position that the next mayor could be any one of Reddin, Unruh, or Bradley (but definitely not Yorty). Meanwhile, the presence of Max Palevsky, Bradley's campaign chair, whose supposed comment suggesting all Whites were somewhat racist, had become a matter of continuing controversy despite his denial of having made the comment. Palevsky departed the Bradley campaign citing a pre-existing commitment.

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<sup>72</sup>"Bradley Seeks to Halt Yorty's TV, Mail Drive," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1973.

<sup>73</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Says Hidden 'Radicals' Work in Bradley Campaign," *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1973.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Yorty's Last Big Push May Be 1969 Rerun," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1973.

<sup>75</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "It's 'Corn' to Many, but Votes to Yorty," *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1973.

<sup>76</sup>"The Decision Is Clear," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1973.

Another controversy erupted when the leader of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton, was said to have endorsed Bradley. Bradley rejected the endorsement saying it was "*an obvious trick by Sam Yorty's campaign.*"<sup>77</sup> (It seems unlikely that Newton would have been inclined to help the Yorty campaign.) Yorty said the endorsement was Bradley's "*own fault because his activity in the past would warrant the endorsement.*"<sup>78</sup> Yorty also stated that Bradley was "*just anti-police, so naturally Huey Newton would prefer him.*"<sup>79</sup>

However, the Bradley campaign had its own revelation regarding Bradley's position on the police. Shortly after the Newton issue was raised, Governor Reagan's former security chief, a former LAPD officer named William Friedman, came forward and said that former police chief William Parker had told him that had Bradley not retired from the LAPD, he would probably have been appointed a deputy chief. The implication was that Parker thought well of Bradley.

Yorty said, however, that Parker had told him that Bradley was "*no good as a policeman*" back when he (Yorty) was considering an endorsement of Bradley City Council.<sup>80</sup> Parker, of course, was long dead and could not be questioned about his former opinions. As this exchange over policing occurred, the *LA Times* editorialized (again) that Bradley was the obvious choice and that "*the city must not be diverted from the real issue.*"<sup>81</sup>

However, the Panther issue would not go away. Yorty said he had discovered that an individual in the Bradley campaign named John Floyd had helped organize the Black Panther Party of California, Inc. Floyd said that organization, which no longer existed, was different from the then-current Black Panthers for Self-Defense.

The now-defunct organization represented an effort to attract more African Americans into politics, according to Floyd.<sup>82</sup> He claimed that some individuals in the defunct group were now associated with the Yorty campaign. Floyd also said he had worked on Yorty's 1961 and 1965 campaign, which Yorty denied. Floyd also stated that "*I consider myself a patriotic American and I disassociate myself from the Black Panthers Party for Self-Defense.*"<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Quoted in Tom Paegel, "Bradley Denounces Newton's Backing, Hints at Yorty Trick," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1973.

<sup>78</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Newton's Support of Bradley Is Warranted," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1973.

<sup>79</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Panthers Naturally Prefer Bradley, Yorty Declares," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1973.

<sup>80</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Parker Had Bradley Slated for Deputy Chief, Ex-Officer Says," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1973.

<sup>81</sup>"Los Angeles Needs Leadership," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1973.

<sup>82</sup>Floyd remained active in local politics after the Bradley campaign.

<sup>83</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Describes Foe as 'Radical Left Winger,'" *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1973.



According to a Field Poll taken in late May, the Bradley-Yorty gap had slightly widened, with about a fifth of voters still undecided.

	Field Poll May 19 - May 23	Field Poll April 28 - May 3	Primary April 3
Bradley	43%	42%	35%
Yorty	37%	39%	29%
Undecided	20%	19%	na
Other candidates	na	na	36%
na = not available			

#### Field Poll Results: May 19 - May 23

	Bradley	Yorty	Undecided
Anglo	37%	42%	21%
Black	77%	4%	19%
Spanish-speaking	45%	40%	15%
Union members	40%	42%	18%
Nonunion	44%	35%	21%
Protestant	39%	42%	19%
Catholic	33%	51%	16%
Jewish	53%	21%	16%
Other religion/none	54%	27%	19%
Men	43%	38%	19%
Women	42%	36%	22%

Although statistical margins of error are not available, it is unlikely that small changes in the percentages of the various subgroupings from the earlier poll had much meaning. There is some surprise in that the official endorsement of organized labor of Bradley did not produce a substantial advantage for him in the leanings of union voters in the new pre-runoff poll. As before, Black and Jewish voters tilted notably toward Bradley. But the election appeared very close overall and likely to be determined by voters who were still undecided.

Only a few days before the runoff election, it was revealed that Mayor Yorty had bought himself a life insurance policy using campaign funds back in 1965. Yorty stated that *"it was none of anybody's business where the money came from"* and claimed (confusingly) that *"I think I earned it."*<sup>84</sup> There was also a renewed controversy about the mailer the Yorty campaign had revised after litigation. The revised

<sup>84</sup>Quoted in Richard Bergholz, "Insurance Policy Bought by Political Gifts, Yorty Admits," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1973.

version carried a statement implying court approval of its contents – against a stipulation in the settlement that no such statement should appear.

The final TV debate, just a few days before the election featured the various topics that had emerged in the lead-up to the runoff. There was Yorty's insurance policy and the donation of the wife of a city official to the Yorty campaign. There was the Huey Newton endorsement of Bradley. There was a mailing to generally White districts by the Yorty campaign warning of a "black bloc" vote. There was John Floyd and the Black Panthers. And there was former police chief William Parker and his opinion of Bradley. The *LA Times* ran yet another editorial saying Bradley was a leader for the city while Yorty seeks "to confuse and deceive."<sup>85</sup> And the city awaited the election and its results.

### From Election to Inauguration

*"We will make Los Angeles the jewel of the Pacific Coast basin and one of the great cities of the world."* -

Mayor-Elect Tom Bradley<sup>86</sup>

*"The change will be a very radical one and there will be a lot of people who wish they got out to vote."*

Mayor Sam Yorty<sup>87</sup>

On the night of Election Day, the absentee ballots – which at the time tended to be conservative – first came in and favored Yorty, raising fears in the Bradley camp that the results of 1969 were repeating.<sup>88</sup> But in the end, the outcome was not even close. The undecided vote tilted heavily towards Bradley when voters had to make a binary decision. Perhaps the result was voter fatigue with Yorty after twelve years. Perhaps – with the memory of the 1965 Watts Riot fading – the racially-tinged Yorty tactics of 1969 did not work as well in 1973. Perhaps it was that Bradley simply did not present as the scary radical that Yorty purported him to be. In 1969, Bradley was just one councilmember who had to introduce himself to the LA electorate. By 1973, however, thanks to the substantial media attention paid to the contest in 1969, Bradley was much better known by voters.

	Runoff May 29	Field Poll May 19 - May 23	Field Poll April 28 - May 3	Primary April 3
Bradley	56%	43%	42%	35%
Yorty	44%	37%	39%	29%
Undecided	na	20%	19%	na
Other candidates	na	na	na	36%
na = not available				

<sup>85</sup>"The Right Mayor for Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1973.

<sup>86</sup>Quoted in Bill Boyarsky, "Bradley Vows to Keep Chief Davis and Provide More Men on the Beat," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1973.

<sup>87</sup>Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>J. Gregory Payne and Scott C. Ratzan, Tom Bradley: *The Impossible Dream* (Santa Monica: Roundtable Publishing, 1986). p. 127.

Still, given Yorty's projection of him as a closet radical, Bradley moved to reassure the city of a smooth transition. Bradley announced he would retain C. Erwin Piper, the city's administrative officer (a kind of chief operating officer or city manager) who handled day-to-day management of the municipal bureaucracy. When Piper died in 1992, then-Mayor Bradley declared that "*in 16 years in public life, the only thing I ever agreed with Sam Yorty on was C. Erwin Piper.*"<sup>89</sup> And rather than upset international relations, Bradley said he would keep Yorty's "sister cities" program intact – a program associated with the former mayor's propensity for foreign travel. Presumably, avoiding the international embarrassment of having to un-sister this or that city was something the mayor-elect wanted to avoid.

Bradley did not have the authority to hire and fire police chiefs. But he indicated that he was happy to have Ed Davis continue as the chief because he was a good administrator. However, he noted that the chief sometimes had made off-the-cuff remarks that weren't helpful and that after the election he had told Chief Davis so in "*the kind of remarks you'd give to a friend.*"<sup>90</sup> (At one point, the chief had talked about trying and hanging airplane hijackers right at the airport.) After a subsequent meeting, Davis declared that he would have "*a good, constructive working relationship*" with the new mayor.<sup>91</sup>

The *LA Times* was naturally pleased with the Bradley victory. It praised his retention of Piper, his plans to appoint a blue-ribbon committee to advise him on administrative appointments, and Bradley's "*commitment to bring unity to the city.*"<sup>92</sup> Bradley's victory led to national TV network coverage and interviews. Exactly how much cooperation Bradley was going to get from Yorty during the transition was unclear. Yorty said he would cooperate. But he reappointed a commissioner to the Housing Commission whose term had lapsed, rather than leave the position open for Bradley to review when he took office on July 1.<sup>93</sup>

Yorty and Bradley met subsequently to discuss the transition and, although there were some words of cooperation, Yorty declined to make a joint photo appearance with Bradley. In a 1978 oral interview, Bradley said Yorty never made a formal "concession" after losing the 1973 election.<sup>94</sup> However, Yorty never disputed the election results.

Apart from the meeting with Yorty, Bradley made trips to Sacramento and Washington to promote a rapid transit plan, even before the inauguration. His campaign finance director, Gray Davis (the eventual governor of California) announced plans to pay off over half a million dollars in campaign debt. Bradley met with the LA County Board of Supervisors to discuss city-county cooperation. He also met with the president of the LA City Council with whom he would have to work once he took office. Plans were made for the July 1 inauguration, and it was announced that former chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Earl Warren would swear in Bradley. Various key aides who would serve the incoming Bradley administration were named.

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<sup>89</sup>Quoted in Burt A. Folkart, "Retired City Executive C. Erwin Piper Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 1992.

<sup>90</sup>Quoted in Robert Rawitch, "Bradley to Require Financial Disclosure by His Appointees," *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1973.

<sup>91</sup>Quoted in Doug Shuit, "Bradley, Davis Call Meeting Productive," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1973.

<sup>92</sup>"A Good Beginning," *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 1973.

<sup>93</sup>The appointment could not take effect without approval of the City Council.

<sup>94</sup>*The Impossible Dream: Tom Bradley, Oral History*, Department of Special Collections, UCLA, 1978-1979, p. 184. Available at <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb4c6009nh/?brand=oac4>.

Yorty left town for an Alaska cruise about a week before the inauguration and announced he would not be attending the ceremony. When he returned to LA about a week after the inauguration, he said Bradley had forgotten to invite him and when he finally received an invitation, it was too late. The next year, he failed in an attempt to win the Democratic nomination for governor. He ran for mayor again in 1977 against Bradley and failed. In 1980, he failed in an attempt to get the Republican nomination for U.S. senator.<sup>95</sup> Apart from these unsuccessful runs for office, Yorty had a local TV show for a time and went back to being a lawyer in the private sector.

Tom Bradley did not run for re-election in 1993, after serving as mayor for twenty years. He had a stroke that left him unable to talk in 1996 and died in 1998 at age 80. That same year, Sam Yorty also suffered a stroke and died soon after at age 88.

### The Yorty Years as a Transition

*"Let it be said that we built the kind of government that the decent, hardworking citizens of Los Angeles respected because it respected them."*

Mayor Tom Bradley's first inaugural address<sup>96</sup>

*"I gave the city an international reputation, and I built the city up in a lot of ways, you know, all the things I built here. Nothing's been done much since."*

Former Mayor Sam Yorty in 1987<sup>97</sup>

The Yorty years encompassed a shift in the center of gravity of Los Angeles that Yorty first rode into power. But the shift eventually left him behind. For many years, the downtown elite and the *LA Times* dominated the fate of the city. But urban development into the once rural San Fernando Valley created a large population of White suburbanites who were distant from downtown and City Hall. The downtown elite wanted city development somehow centered on the downtown, the pattern of major cities elsewhere. But the freeways and the automobile meant that development would be spread.

The new arrivals were more attuned to a Yorty of Studio City in the Valley than to the old guard. It was a matter of style in part and a matter of distance. The newcomers didn't like to be told by City Hall that they had to separate their trash, Yorty's issue against downtown elite in 1961. And what happened downtown in terms of development wasn't of much interest to those in the Valley; they didn't go there.

As for other elements of policy, Yorty and the old guard were not that different. Both favored a limited city government that worked reasonably well but that didn't muck around with social issues. Social issues were best left to the police to deal with, in this view. Both favored boosterism and civic projects such as the Music Center. Thus, although the *LA Times* fervently opposed Yorty in 1961, when it became apparent during his first term that the streets would be paved and growth would continue, it endorsed him in 1965.

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<sup>95</sup>It's not clear when Yorty formally changed his voter registration from Democratic to Republican.

<sup>96</sup>Quoted in "'Turn to Tomorrow' – Bradley Outlines Plans in Inaugural Talk," *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1973.

<sup>97</sup>*Ask the Mayor: Samuel Yorty*, UCLA Oral History Program, 1987. Available at <https://archive.org/details/askmayororalhist00yort/page/n7/mode/2up>.



The Watts Riot shortly after the 1965 election, however, demonstrated that all was not well in Los Angeles and suggested that there should be a mayor who thought doing something about the underlying conditions that produced it was part of the job. Yorty didn't think it was his job. Bradley did. So, the *Times*, whose political orientation was itself shifting with its readership, endorsed Bradley in 1969.

Watts, however, produced two opposing forces. The rising liberal Westside voters and elites saw Watts as a wake-up call to confront the social ills of the city and saw Bradley as a potential answer. Black voters saw Yorty as unresponsive to their concerns and Bradley as someone who would pay attention. But Watts, combined with other fractures that had developed in society – campus unrest, Vietnam War protests, assassinations – also created a backlash that enabled Yorty to be re-elected in his first contest with Bradley.

By 1973, at least at the time of the municipal elections, there was a calmer external atmosphere. With less fear in the air, other concerns such as the environment became more significant. The world had changed. Yorty remained the same. Bradley represented the future; Yorty the past.<sup>98</sup>

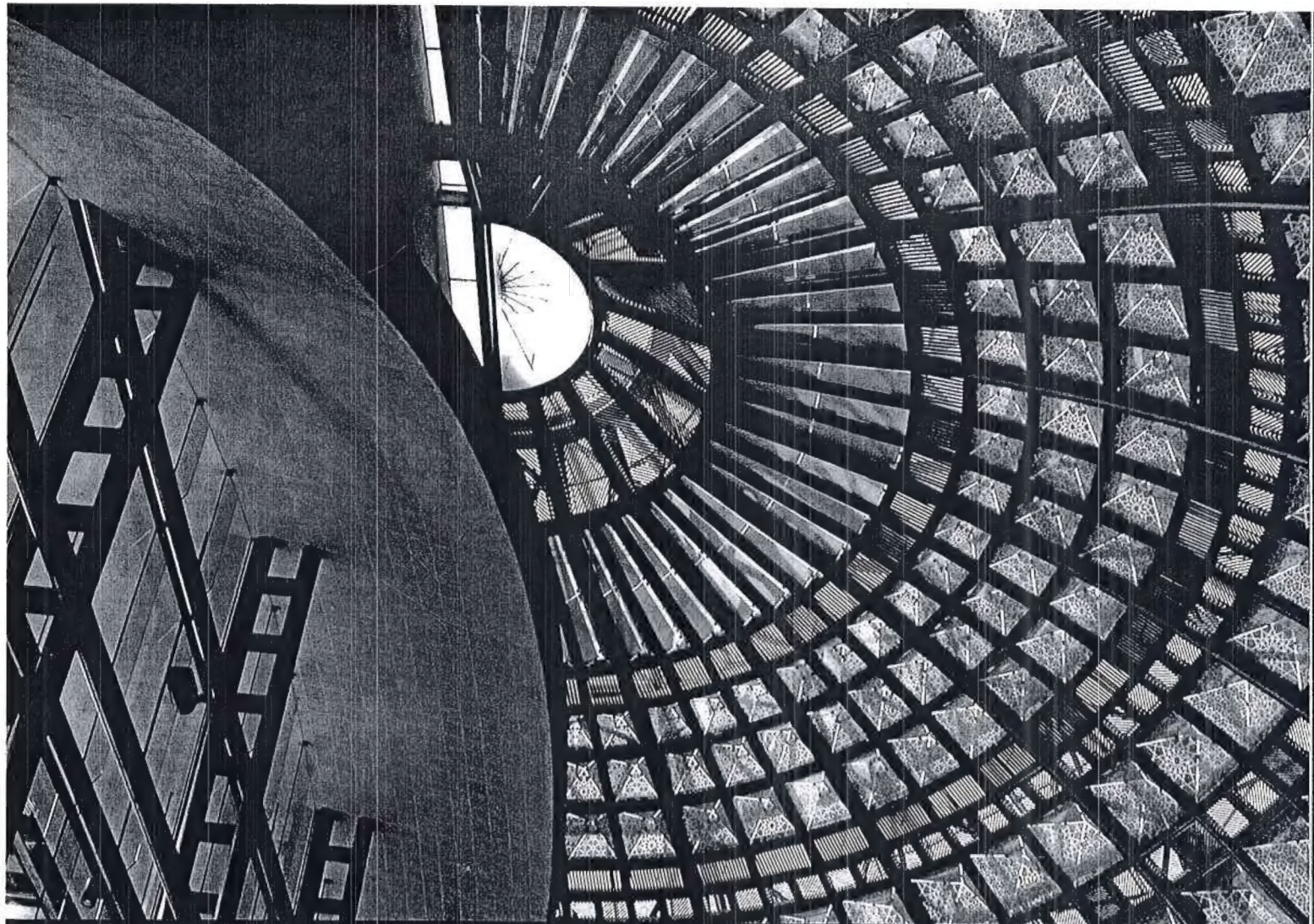
With hindsight, we know that Bradley couldn't fix everything that ailed LA, especially in the context of LA's weak mayor system. He did see the new transit system for LA that he advocated start to be constructed, a project that is still underway. But his final term as mayor also saw the LA Riot, a sign that major social problems remained in the city. Reforms of the LAPD followed, although these changes largely played out under subsequent mayors. Still, when international travelers arrive and depart from the Los Angeles airport, they are likely to do so through the Tom Bradley terminal. Students in the local school district attend the Tom Bradley Global Awareness Magnet School.

In contrast, there are no monuments in LA to Sam Yorty. If Yorty is remembered at all, it is in the shadow of his campaigns against Bradley. Yes, during Yorty's years in office, the modern LA Zoo was created, as was the Convention Center, and the Music Center. But Yorty is known instead for the kind of divisive politics that have now returned to contemporary America.

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<sup>98</sup>The documentary, "Bridging the Divide: Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race," by Lyn Goldfarb and Alison Sotomayor (2015) argues that the Bradley coalition served as a model for the Obama campaign at the national level. Available from <https://www.mayortombradley.com/>.





# California Policy Options 2023

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